

RED CHINA ESCALATE INFILTRATION OF NEPAL

The Kingdom of Nepal is situated between the Tibetan region of the Chinese People's Republic on the north and India to the west and south. The Indian protectorate of Sikkim abuts it on the east. This buffer country is thus completely landlocked. It is rectangular in shape, extending 550 miles in length along the southern slopes and base of the Himalaya mountains. Nepal's average width is 100 miles and it has a total area of 54,362 square miles.

To the northward the Himalayas constitute a massive natural frontier in depth. On the south, however, Nepal lacks a natural frontier. Here, geologically, it is a part of the North Indian plain. Thus Nepal's southern boundary is demarcated by pillars set up at intervals similar to the markers found along the U.S.-Canadian boundary. To the west the Mahakali river forms a natural frontier with India. On the east the Mechi river and the Singalila range separate Nepalese territory from that of India and Sikkim.

Nepal does not merely consist of highlands as is commonly believed. The country can be divided into three broad physical zones: the highlands, the midlands, and the lowlands. The lowlands have similar ranges of altitude and climate found in adjoining parts of India. It is a region rich in tropical flora and fauna. This lowland belt (Terai), extending from the eastern to the western boundary, averages twenty miles in width. The Terai contains roughly 8,000 square miles or about 1/7 of the total area of the country. It is the breadbasket of Nepal.

The midlands contain beautiful Himalayan valleys. Kathmandu, the Nepalese capital, is located in this zone. The main concentrations of population are found in this region, which comprises about 20,000 square miles, almost 1/3 of the total territory of Nepal. Altitudes here vary between 3,500 and 6,000 feet above sea level.

Northward beyond these Himalayan valleys, known for their fertility and scenic beauty, are the real highlands. Altitudes vary between 7,500 and 17,000 feet. It is a sparsely populated region of alpine climate but contains some excellent pasture lands. Towering over these highlands stand some of the highest mountain peaks in the world: Everest (29,141 feet), Kinchenjunga (28,146), Makalu (27,790), and Dhaulagiri (26,141). These are just a few of the world renowned heights to be found in Nepal.

The Himalayas have not only served as a sentinel of Nepalese freedom in the past but have also afforded protection against the cold desert winds blowing over the general Tibetan region. Himalayan watersheds are the source of all river and irrigation systems found within the country. The Himalayas have always deeply influenced the life and thinking of the people in the Kingdom -- their folklore and literature, their religion and culture.

Nepal, situated between the two vast land masses of Asian civilization, China and India, has been the ideal meeting ground of influence originating beyond her frontiers. Racially, the Nepalese are an admixture of the main strains in the Aryan and Mongoloid stocks. Ethnologically, the Nepalese seem to have a closer affinity to the sturdy stock of people residing to the north. Culturally, however, they are found to be more easily susceptible and amenable to the civilizing and edifying influences of the south. Historically, Nepal has served as a catalyst, as it were, for racial, religious and cultural influences coming from India on the one hand and Tibet and central Asia on the other.

The country's religious culture is a fusing of Hindu, Buddhist, Bonpo, and Tantric influences. The religious tradition of Nepal is unique. Unlike other parts of Asia, here religion has always been considered a matter of personal choice, conviction and belief. Nepalese history records Buddhist kings of a

ruling dynasty whose sons were devout Hindus, while their grandsons displayed a remarkable interest in the practice of Tantrism. Hindus and Buddhists have always lived in peace and amity with each other and with a small minority of Muslims who have not suffered religious persecution of any kind.

It is significant that Nepal had enjoyed perfect religious and national harmony even when racial and religious riots were the order of the day on the other side of the border. Not a single drop of blood had been shed in Nepal in the name of religion.

The Chinese have spent money liberally in cultivating friends in Nepal, a tactic they borrowed from Nepal's notoriously corrupt politicians and palace hangers-on. In this they have had the greatest success among the students, who number fewer than 10,000 but constitute a real political force.

Chinese followers wearing Mao badges control the student union of Nepal's single university, for which American aid helped provide buildings on a new suburban campus. They are also threatening to take over other student government bodies by exploiting internal quarrels, many of them over legitimate grievances.

In picking candidates for cultivation, the Chinese have manipulated the closed society that has prevailed here for seven years since King Mahendra jailed the last popularly elected government and deprived the country of normal political competition. This has been done for the most part openly.

The American Embassy appears unaware of the extent of Chinese penetration and American Officials here lack money to counter the propaganda. The powerlessness of the Americans has not been missed by the Nepalese.

Potential Nepalese supporters of the United States here feel that they are being left in the lurch by Americans seeking to prove that they are better friends of the King than the Chinese.

Katmandu has two staunchly pro-Chinese daily newspapers, The New China News Agency distributes its anti-Indian and anti-American news stories and features to them free. Nepalese newspapers print few handouts from Western embassies and none dares show itself as pro-Western.

More money might help, but the Americans have avoided imitating the Chinese operation. "We're always starting things and getting four fingers burned," a Nepalese here is quoted as saying. "In Nepal, Americans are not starting anything unless we're asked to".

When the American Embassy turned down a request from the Nepalese government for grain on the grounds that Nepal is not a deficit country, the Chinese stepped in within six weeks with an offer of 20,000 tons of rice.

Moreover, they shrewdly allowed the Nepalese government to make the announcement, thereby giving the government face. Advice to the American Embassy to adopt a similar "low silhouette" has been ignored repeatedly.

Peking appears to be in good position to take over control of Nepal if a political upheaval in this Himalayan kingdom threatens the personal rule of King Mahendra. What the Chinese have done is to beat out India by infiltrating important segments of Nepalese society under cover of a Red Guard Blitzkrieg.

The struggle goes back to the days when India provided a haven for Nepalese politicians in exile but it began in earnest in 1952 when Indian army engineers started work on the first road (Tribhub Raj Path) link across the mountains into the secluded kingdom. Holding out the carrot of trade with Tibet, which has lured Nepalis for centuries, the Chinese won permission to build their own road to Katmandu as a grant in aid.

Chinese influence is the ascendancy and Indian influence is in decline. The Chinese lump India and the United States together and anti-American slogans have become commonplace here.

In Katmandu, Maoist elements have captured control of the restless students, the only real political force outside of the royal palace. Chinese infiltration extends deep into the government ministries and the rubber-stamp National Panchayat, which substitutes for a parliament.

In the countryside outside Katmandu, where the writ of the government runs thin, the Chinese enjoy a free hand in distributing virulent anti-Americans propaganda. In remote villages near the Tibetan border.

One of Peking's greatest coups has been to infiltrate the panchayat system, King Mahendra's substitute for parliamentary democracy. Elected village representatives elect their own representatives and so on in a pyramiding process until 125 members form the "National Panchayat" in Katmandu.

The system gives the villagers the feeling of electing somebody without giving them anyone directly responsible to them for seeing that their grievance are voiced in the government. Into this system the Chinese have worked their agents.

The powers of the village panchayats are now being extended to such matters as tax collection and the distribution of basic commodities, which are rationed. In Dharan District, for instance, the panchayats are empowered to distribute sugar, but a recent visitor found no sugar for sale despite the fact that Dharan is on the edge of one of Nepal's biggest sugar-growing areas. The opportunities this control offers Chinese agents are limitless.

Kathmandu, the capital of the Kingdom of Nepal, is connected with India across the fertile plains of the Tarai and a most picturesque mountain highway which ascends to the altitude of 8200 ft. It joins Kathmandu with the Indian border town of Raxual. This is the Tribhuban Raj Path. There are other mountain highways like the Kodari Highway connecting Kathmandu with the border of the Tibet Region of the People's Republic of China. The Sunauli-Pokhara high-

way, now nearing completion, will open up the enchanting Lake Valley of Pokhara to surface transport.

Chinese diplomatic pressures on Nepal are growing and observers here wonder how long Mahendra will be able to hold out. With the new road to Tibet open, the Chinese are using it as a pretext for destroying India's favored treatment in Nepal.

For instance, they are arguing that trade would be stepped up over the road if China were accorded the same privileges as India although there is no sound economic basis for this argument. Chinese exports to Nepal still come through Calcutta and across the India-Nepal border because it is cheaper to ship by sea than by truck through Tibet.

Peking is reliably reported to have submitted to the Nepalese government a six-point memorandum demanding equal treatment with India in trade facilities and treatment of nationals. Under the 1950 treaty of peace and friendship between India and Nepal, Indians are accorded national treatment in Nepal "with regards to participation in industrial and economic development" and "in the matter of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce, and other privileges of a similar nature". Equal treatment for the Chinese presumably would open Nepal to even more Chinese subversion than is now going on.

In March, 1965, the Nepalese government, under pressure from Communist China and deluged with climbing requests from mountaineers the world over, announced that it would grant no more permits to foreign expeditions. Since the Nepalese themselves do not climb, this left the Himalayan peaks of Nepal to the wind and clouds.

Among the last foreign expeditions permitted was the Indian Everest expedition which reached the 29,029-foot summit in 1965.

The Chinese had objected to Americans and other Westerns peering into Tibet from Nepal. Some expeditions had actually crossed into Tibet and the Communists suspected them of fraternizing with the Khamba tribesmen who are still fighting the Chinese.

But the order also applied to peaks like Annapurna, Dhaulagiri, and Kanchenjunga, which, unlike Everest, are well south of the Tibetan border. Mountaineers blame the crush of requests by foreign groups for the government's decision to ban all climbs.

Chinese engineers recently completed two warehouse complexes at the ends of the road from Katmandu to India. The warehouses are purportedly for the storage of goods in transit but no foreign embassies were invited to the dedication ceremony and the huge windowless warehouses here have remained tightly sealed. They are apparently unused but no one really knows what is inside them.

By constructing the Katmandu-Tibet road through one of the low-level valley openings in the Himalayan range, Mustang; the Chinese have not only achieved a long-range strategic breakthrough that will affect the security policies of every country in the subcontinent. They have also upset American assumptions that the Nepalese economy was susceptible to orderly development with the help of foreign aid in the direction of integration with the non-Communist world. Now aid projects have to be re-examined.

The road itself is now several miles west of Katmandu on its way to Pokhara at the southern foot of the Annapurna range. At the head of the road, Chinese construction workers have erected a huge theater stage decked in red bunting amid the cranes and dump trucks of their forward construction camp. At night, with the day's work finished, the Chinese pack the ground in front

of the stage with Nepalese from nearby villages.

Dancers leap across the stage beneath a huge portrait of Mao, an orchestra plays military marches and a translator reads a synopsis of the action.

When it all ends, the Chinese who live at the camp's rude barracks circulate through the audience distributing Mao badges and Mao's sayings. When another length of road is completed, the whole camp, including the theater, is dismantled and set up again at the head of the road. Here again Chinese propaganda infiltration of segments from villages has been accomplished.



